

Two Poets of the Peasantry

29

are here anticipated by Piers, with his wife
Dame Worche-
whan-tyme-is and his daughter Do-righte-
so-or-thi-
dame-shal-thee-bete. His son's name
occupies nearly two
lines; and even the brooks in his country do
not murmur
to be called 'Beth-buxom^bedientJ-of-
speche'.

But it was, above all, members of the
Church that
could find their own likenesses illuminating
these crabbed
pages, from Pope to acolyte. Not flattering
likenesses,
mostly, in these years when mediaeval
Christianity was
rotting fast and simony could gather a
hundred thousand
ecclesiastics, it is said, to fish for St. Peter's
loaves and
fishes at Avignon, on the election of Clement
VI:

God amende the Pope • that pileth holy kirke,
And cleymeth bifor the kynge • to be keper ouer
Crystene,
And counteth nought though Crystene • ben culled
(killed) androbbed,
And fynt (maintains) folke to fyghte * and Cristene
blood to spille!⁴

Cardinals are no better:

The contre is the curseder • that cardynales come
inne;
And there (where) they ligge and lenge (lie and
linger) • moste
lecherye there regneth.

As for Bishops, God amend them too! They
license

pardoners to fleece the poor; or wearing
sonorous tides
to sees *inpartibus infidelium*, like the Bishop
of Bethlehem,
instead of going to win converts and die
martyrs among
their heathen flocks,

Hippe (hop) aboute in Engelsonde • to halwe (hallow)
mennes auteres
(altars).

⁴Por the frenzy of feeling against the abuses of the

Papacy at
 Avignon, see *S. Brigittae Revelationes*, I, xli, where
 Christ says to the
 Pope: 'Tu autem peior es Lucifero . . * tu es injustior
 Pilato .. .tu
 immitior Juda, qui me solum vendidit; tu autem non
 soluin me
 vendis, sed et animas electorum meorum. Tu
 abominabilior
 ludaeis , . .' Michelet, who quotes the above, relates
 how at this
 time the Visconti were not afraid to offer the Papal
 legates who
 brought them a bull of excommunication, the choice
 of earing it
 themselves, of being drowned.